



USDA Foreign Agricultural Service

GAIN Report

Global Agriculture Information Network

Template Version 2.09

Voluntary Report - Public distribution

Date: 2/8/2008

GAIN Report Number: IN8011

India

Agricultural Situation

Weekly Highlights & Hot Bites, #6

2008

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Report Highlights:

National Policy on Biofuel by March, *3.59 million birds culled; 86 Rapid Response Teams in West Bengal*, *West Bengal Bans Sale of Poultry*, *Poor Rabi May Hit Grain Output*, *Trade Distorting Sops to Delay Doha round: India*, *Soymeal exports rise 14 percent*.

Includes PSD Changes: No
Includes Trade Matrix: No
Annual Report
New Delhi [IN1]
[IN]

Welcome to Hot Bites from India, a weekly summary of issues of interest to the U. S. agricultural community. The report includes information that has been garnered during travel within India, reported in the local media, or offered by host country officials and agricultural analysts. Press articles are included and summarized in this report. Significant issues will be expanded upon in subsequent reports from this office. Minor grammatical changes have been made for clarification.

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NATIONAL POLICY ON BIOFUEL BY MARCH

The Minister for New and Renewable Energy said that the central government's proposed National Policy on Biofuels is expected to be ready by March. The draft policy is awaiting a final clearance from an inter-ministerial group on biofuels headed by the Minister of Agriculture Mr. Sharad Pawar. The main focus of the policy is on indigenous production of biofuels. The policy proposes two separate guidelines for bio-ethanol and biodiesel. The proposed policy has accorded high priority to produce bio-diesel from non-edible oilseeds like jatropha. (Source: Business Line, 02/2/08)

3.59 MILLION BIRDS CULLED; 86 RAPID RESPONSE TEAMS IN WEST BENGAL

According to the High Security Animal Disease Laboratory, Bhopal, the test results of the last batch of samples tested for high path avian influenza virus were found to be negative. However, mortality of 79 birds was reported from three districts of West Bengal on February 6, 2008. A total of 86 rapid response teams were engaged as on February 6, 2007, which completed culling of 11,820 birds taking the cumulative culling to 3.59 million birds in West Bengal. A total of 1.48 million and 79,945 kg of eggs and feed were destroyed till February 6, 2007.

AI control measures have also been initiated in the neighboring states, with 34,423 birds already culled in Assam on February 5, 2007. The culling has also commenced in Bihar, while the government of Jharkhand is engaged in the process of identifying the priority areas for culling. Orissa's plan of action is not final. (Source: The Press Information Bureau, 02/7/08)

WEST BENGAL BANS SALE OF POULTRY

The West Bengal state government has banned the sale and movement of poultry throughout the state for an indefinite period. The decision was taken days after the state's announcement 'Avian flu situation among the poultry is now controlled'. According to state government officials, the move was initiated to avoid any risk of further outbreaks of AI. Sources apprehend that the decision was enforced after the government realized that it was still unable to contain the spread of virus. The government has reported that relief will be provided to all affected people, including the businessman, self help groups and others. Financial assistance of \$1.25 million has been received by the central government and the state government has demanded \$18.7 million. The government has also asked police, village administrations and municipalities to conduct raids at different places, apart from keeping a strict vigil to enforce the ban. (Source: The Indian Express, 02/06/08)

POOR RABI MAY HIT GRAIN OUTPUT

The Agricultural Ministry projects 2007-08 overall grain output growth at just 0.9 percent. The low growth in the foodgrain production is due to the lower grain output in the current rabi (winter) which is anticipated to fall by 3.1 percent. However, the Agricultural Secretary has stated that these were conservative projections and the situation may change if wheat output turns out to be better than last year. Additionally, the final production will depend upon the temperature and weather till March end. The Agriculture Ministry has estimated 2007-08 foodgrain production at 219.32 million tons, which is 0.9 percent higher than the last year. The rabi grain harvest is projected at 103.44 million tons, down 3.27 million tons compared to the last rabi season. The output of rice from both kharif and rabi season is projected at highest ever at 9.1 million tons, surpassing last year's estimate of 93.35 million tons. Although, wheat production is forecast at a conservative 74.81 million tons. The output of oilseeds is forecast to grow by 11.8 percent and that of pulses by 0.9 percent in 2007-08 compared to that of 2006-07. (Source: Business Standard, 02/8/08)

TRADE DISTORTING SOPS TO DELAY DOHA ROUND: INDIA

India has warned that the conclusion of the WTO's Doha development round talks would be delayed, if the rich countries do not firmly commit to reduce their multi billion dollar "trade distorting" farm subsidies and grant significant market access to products and services from developing and poor countries. Reviewing the progress of the talks at Geneva, the Commerce and Industry Minister stated that the key issues like effective cuts in farm subsidies, inclusion of sensitive and special products, special safeguard mechanisms, tariff rate quotas and tariff simplification are yet to be resolved in the agriculture negotiations. It was emphasized that farm subsidies of rich nations have adversely impacted global agricultural prices affecting the livelihoods of millions of farmers in the developing world. He further said that, India has recently made it clear that it would not bow to 'pressure tactics' adopted by the WTO Director and the EU to close the Doha round in March-April, with the approach favoring rich nations. (Source: The Financial Express, 02/8/08)

SOYMEAL EXPORTS RISE 14 PERCENT

Indian soymeal exports recorded a 13.9 percent growth in the first four months of 07/08. Bumper soybean production in 2007 and growing demand from oilmeal consuming countries has boosted exports of soymeal. Total soymeal exports were recorded at 1.97 million tons from October 07 to January 2008 compared to 1.73 million tons during the same period last year. According to the Solvent Extractors Association of India, shipments to Vietnam and Japan grew at 51.66 percent and 78.23 percent, respectively. The east and south east Asian countries remained the main export markets for the country. (Source: Business Standard, 02/08/08)

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REPORT #	SUBJECT	DATE SUBMITTED
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